Special callsign as a tribute to the 37th Americain Expeditionary Force from Ohio. From 26 september untill 26 oktober 2014

OP37AEF

2014-18
100 years Great War

Operated by ON4AEE • ON4ACW • ON6YX • ON7ME

UBA

Actual bridge as built in 1983

37th 'BUCKEYE' division OHIO

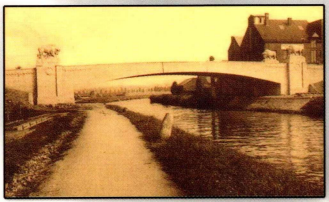
EINE

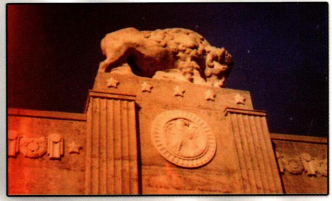
Commemoration station
26 september 2014

" In memory of crossing of the Scheldt by the 37th division A.E.F. "

stad OUDENAARDE

CNUDDE





Original bridge as built in 1929

The story of the Ohio bridge in Oudenaarde – Eine

Before World War I a metal bridge connected both banks of the River " De Schelde" between the villages Eine and Nederename. It was blown up by the Belgian Army in 1914 to slow down the German assault at the beginning of WW I. After their breakthrough in 1914 the Germans replaced it very quickly by a wooden bridge, which they destroyed again in 1918 in order to stop the Allied advance at the river. On Nov. 1, 1918, the Ohio Army National Guard's 37th Infantry "Buckeye" Division faced the daunting task of crossing the river in Belgium to attack the heavily fortified German "Hindenburg Line" during World War I. Prior to the attack, Sgt. Paul Smithhisler, of Mount Vernon, Ohio, and Pvt. Frank Burke, of Cleveland, volunteered to make a daring night reconnaissance of enemy lines. While Burke waited on the American side of the icy river, Smithhisler swam across and sketched diagrams of enemy machine gun nests and artillery positions while dodging German sentries and patrols. He swam back just as dawn approached. He was spotted by the Germans who fired machine guns at him, then artillery rounds including gas shells. Burke pulled the exhausted soldier from the slippery riverbank, then fitted a gas mask to Smithhisler before donning his own. Smithhisler's drawings enabled American artillery to punch an opening through German lines for the infantry to follow. He subsequently received a Distinguished Service Cross, Silver Star and French Croix de Guerre. A French Engineering Corps provided the bridge equipment, while similar American companies from the 37th AEF Div build the new pontoon brigde. The 91st AEF Div pushed forward from Waregem to Wortegem and Moregem through the "Spitaals woods". They reached Oudenaarde on November 1st 1918. The war ended less than two weeks after that heroic swim. Burke, 21, died of influenza a month later. The bridge was rebuild in 1929 as the first Belgian pre-stressed concrete bridge in commemoration of the battle on the river during WW I by the 37th div. AEF . Theyre victims rest on the American "Flanders Field" Cemetary and Memorial in Waregem. On the Ohio bridge four huge concrete American bisons keep gard, in remembrance of the American help for rebuilding the bridge. In 1940, at the beginning of WW II, the brigde was once again blown up by the retreating troops, but rebuild – even bigger – after the war in 1954. This second bridge was replaced in 1983 due to the recalibration of the river for ships up to 3000 ton with the bisons placed at the entrance of the bridge on each side of the river bank.

To Radio :

W9YT

OP37AEF confirms the following QSO(s):

Date	Time	Band	Mode	RST
14-10-2014	16:45	10m	SSB	59

TNX for the QSO's

Qsl via ON4OB

Sgt. Paul Smithhissler

Cpl. Frank Burke

www.on5ur.be QSL